

Report to:	Licensing and Regulatory Committee	Date of Meeting:	Monday 5 September 2022
Subject:	Review of Topographical Knowledge Test for Hackney Carriage Drivers		
Report of:	Head of Highways and Public Protection	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	N	Included in Forward Plan:	N
Exempt / Confidential Report:	N		

Summary:

To request the removal of the requirement for new Hackney Carriage drivers to undertake the topographical street knowledge type test and bring them in line with private hire drivers.

Recommendation(s):

- (1) Remove the requirement for new hackney carriage drivers to undertake the additional street knowledge test.
- (2) All new driver applications will still be required to pass the test on conditions

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

The numbers of hackney carriage drivers have reduced in the last few years and the requirement to undertake an additional test appears to be a barrier for new applicants. There are a number of hackney carriage vehicles that are not currently being used including wheelchair accessible vehicles.

Hackney carriage owners and trade representatives have asked that the Council remove the additional test requirement and align with the private hire applicants who have to undertake a knowledge of conditions test only.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

None

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

The cost of the consultation will be met from within existing budgets for the service.

(B) Capital Costs

There are no direct capital implications associated with the recommendations in this report.

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): The cost of the service is wholly recovered from the ring-fenced Taxi Licensing Trade Account (Revenue Budget BD12).	
Legal Implications: The Town Police Clauses Act 1847 and The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 provide that a district council may set out criteria when undertaking their taxi and private hire licensing functions and may attach to the grant of a licence such conditions as they may consider reasonably necessary.	
Equality Implications: There are no equality implications.	
Climate Emergency Implications: The recommendations within this report will	
Have a positive impact	N
Have a neutral impact	Y
Have a negative impact	N
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Y

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable:
Facilitate confident and resilient communities:

Commission, broker and provide core services: Support effective running of a taxi fleet.
Place – leadership and influencer:
Drivers of change and reform:
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Improvement of
Greater income for social investment:
Cleaner Greener

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD6918/22) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD5118/22) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Trade representatives and fleet owners.

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Appendices:

There are no appendices to this report

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 In 2015 and 2017, the Licensing and Regulatory Committee considered the use of the street knowledge test as part of the fit and proper assessment for all drivers.
- 1.2 In 2017, the requirement for a street knowledge test was removed for private hire drivers but retained for new hackney carriage drivers at the request of the trade.

2. Current Situation

- 2.1 Sefton licences 271 hackney carriage vehicles with 123 of these vehicles being wheelchair accessible.
- 2.2 In March 2022, the Council licensed 328 hackney carriage drivers. As of 1 August 2022, this number has decreased to 275.
- 2.3 The Council licences 271 hackney carriage vehicles with 255 currently in use.

3. Trade Request

- 3.1 Hackney carriage trade representatives and fleet owners have stated that new applicants are discouraged by the extra street knowledge test required compared to private hire driver licences. This has led to issues finding drivers for vehicles and an impact on fulfilling school contracts and the number of vehicles generally available within Sefton.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The Council has not conducted any new tests for hackney carriage drivers since March 2020 and no new applications have been received. Advancements in mobile phone mapping technology have potentially removed the need for detailed local street knowledge.
- 4.2 The numbers of available drivers seem to have been affected by the pandemic as many drivers did not renew their licences. There also appears to be a barrier to new applicants being received due to the test. It is therefore suggested that the test on conditions should be applied as the only test for all types of drivers in order to encourage applicants to consider hackney carriage licences.